

Good afternoon. My name is Michelle Cardenas. I am 15 years old, a member of St. Rose of Lima, and I live in New Haven,

I have a 6-year-old brother, Edgar. He is here with me today. A few minutes after birth, the doctors say, he suffered a stroke. The stroke left Edgar paralyzed, so that he can't move by himself and has trouble speaking. But he has a huge heart full of love!

My parents are immigrants, and they are my heroes. They struggle every day to give us the best they can, and especially they struggle to get healthcare and treatment for my brother. It is very hard to find good care, and it is very expensive.

But every day is an uncertainty for us, since my parents are one of the thousands who do not have driver's licenses. What hurts me most is that the most affected are the children, like my brother Edgar, born in this country, that are sick or in need of care.

Sometimes they have to go to other states for medical treatment, but their parents are afraid to drive, to avoid encounters with the police. Sometimes immigrant and U.S citizens kids, don't get the care they badly need because of the paralyzing fear of their parents – fear to do something as simple as driving to the doctor.

Or even many kids needs a mechanical wheel chair, or any equipment that will help them survive in the car, most of the times they need a bigger car, however many families don't buy a new car because they know, that they will not be able to register it, and preventing problems with the police. They will recue their child life, just because they won't be able to have the equipment's with them, and trying to prevent problems.

We know fellow St. Rose parishioners who have not stopped their cars on the side of the highway or street to help their epileptic child, Aldeir, when he was having a seizure, for fear of the police pulling over to the side to investigate.

Sometimes I think of dropping out of school to help my mom, but she gives me support and gives me strength to go on. I would like to earn a degree and be a professional one day that can help children like my brother.

This struggle is a daily part of our history. What happens behind closed doors of homes, to good families, sometimes is so painful that I prefer silence.

I am 15 years old, and soon I will be able to vote!

My generation, my friends, understand this struggle, our immigrant struggle. I know that my generation will change things and make life worth it for every honest person who lives in this country. Thank you.